HAUNTED BRUSHY MOUNTAIN STATE PENITENTIARY

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Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, Tennessee's first maximum security prison, was a place of brutality and inhumane conditions.

This notorious prison was once the home of infamous assassin James Earl Ray. While James was doing his time at the prison, he escaped with six other inmates. His freedom was short lived; he was captured after 54 hours.

The prison was established in 1896, and by the 1930s, it housed 976 prisoners. The prison's various nicknames — including "The End of the Line" and "The Gates of Hell" — seem quite appropriate due to the horrible conditions and violence that occurred there.

Many of the prisoners were forced to work in the mines nearby. Violence would often erupt in the mines, where prisoners fought other prisoners. These brutal fights led to serious injuries or death. And when the prisoners got out of line, they were tortured by flogging. The prisoners were brutalized by the guards, and many of them reportedly died at the hands of the guards.

The prison eventually closed on June 11, 2009.

Reported paranormal activity at the prison has included prison visitors being scratched and choked by unseen entities. They have also heard vicious growls coming from some of the cells and seen entities crawling along the floor. EVPs have been caught around the prison grounds, and phantom footsteps are often hear in the prison.

Ghost hunting enthusiasts mention that an aerial view of the prison reveals an inverted cross. They also mention that while investigating, they have heard men screaming, the sounds of flogging, gurgling sounds, and various growling noises.

While Brushy Mountain Prison is now shut down, it still opens its doors for prison tours and ghost-hunting groups.

Duc Duong, a former soldier I used to work with, lives in Tennessee and has been on their paranormal tour. Went he went on the tour, he broke away from the group and had a terrifying experience. He was pushed by an unseen force and fell face down on the ground. He felt slime all around him, and when he looked at his hands, they were covered in brown filth that looked like human feces.

Ghost-hunting groups investigating the prison have heard men screaming, the sounds of flogging, gurgling sounds, and various growling noises.

Duc started screaming, and his wife ran over to him, finding him on the ground. Duc then noticed that there was nothing on his hands and he was simply on hard cement — there was no feces. Duc says that, somehow, he had imagined the feces.

When Duc explained this to me, I wondered if this was some type of paranormal event that was able to show Duc something that happened many years ago at the prison. Duc was traumatized by the event and has no desire to ever return to the prison. He said that he felt like the prison was truly the "Gates of Hell." ◆